

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP



**INDEPENDENT EVALUATION STUDY OF
ADF-VII, VIII AND IX
SUMMARY RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF
FEEDBACK WORKSHOP FOR PARTICIPANTS FROM
RMCS**

**OPERATIONS EVALUATION DEPARTMENT
(OPEV)**

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Summary Record of the Proceedings of Feedback Workshop
for Participants from RMCs
Addis Ababa – July 29, 2004

1. INTRODUCTION

A feedback workshop organised by Operations Evaluation Department (OPEV) of the African Development Bank to discuss the independent Evaluation Study of ADF VII-IX was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 29 July 2004. It was attended by representatives of 18 selected Regional Member Countries (RMCs) comprising officials at senior levels such as Directors General, Directors and Deputy Directors from the Ministries / Departments of Finance, Economic Development, Planning, Budget in their respective country governments. Mr. V. R. Mehta, an independent Evaluation Consultant acted as the Facilitator and chaired the workshop. A list of participants is included in the *Annex*.

2. THE INAUGURAL ADDRESS

Mr. Getinet W. Giorgis, Director, OPEV, welcomed the Chief Guest Her Excellency Dr. Mulu Ketsela, State Minister for Finance and Economic Development, Government of Ethiopia, and other participants to the workshop. He then requested Dr. Ketsela to inaugurate the workshop.

In her inaugural address Dr. Ketsela reminded the participants that Ethiopia is one of the founder members of both the African Development Bank (ADB) in 1964, and the African Development Fund (ADF) in 1972. She referred to the many challenges faced by ADB since its establishment as an exclusively African institution. She also alluded to the fact that, in order to retain the African character of the institution, although non-regional states provided for 98% of the finances of ADF the voting rights were equally divided between regional and non-regional members. Dr. Ketsela recounted that the total Bank assistance so far to Ethiopia amounted to UA 1.23 billion for 78 projects and studies. Of this, it had been allocated UA 532 million for 23 projects and studies from ADF VII-IX. Resources from ADF have been directed to macro economic support and for important sectors such as agriculture, transport, social and public utilities.

Dr. Ketsela hoped that this independent evaluation will help the Bank Group and ADF beneficiaries in assessing their past performances so as to improve the effectiveness of future interventions. Widespread poverty in Africa has been of great concern both to Africa and its development partners. To achieve substantial poverty reduction and attain the millennium development goals (MDGs) greater resource flows from the development partners are inescapable for Africa. ADB and ADF have both a major responsibility as well as a catalytic role in mobilising resources from the African and international partners. The findings of the study have indicated that the Bank Group has undergone far-reaching institutional reforms and has established a sound policy framework and that its processes and programmes are now consistent with the best practices. This is, however, not an end in itself. A lot more needs to be done to enhance the operational effectiveness of the Bank Group. The *unfinished business* identified in the evaluation report needs to be finished. There is need to improve Bank's operational efficiency. Establishment of country offices and empowering them with necessary decision-making powers is also essential to facilitate speedy and efficient project design and implementation. The findings of the evaluation will assist the Bank Group in framing its interventions in a way that would make it a more effective and efficient development partner. Dr. Ketsela also referred to the unique opportunity for the Bank Group beneficiaries to contribute to improve the quality of future benefits and services to be

derived from the Bank Group. In conclusion, she expressed her hope that the findings of the feedback workshop will enable the Africa's developing countries to secure more of the much-needed resources in the next round of replenishment negotiations for ADF X.

3. SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION BY IDS TEAM

A presentation of the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the report was then made by Dr. Keith Bezanson, (former Director of IDS), who led the evaluation team.

He introduced the report by explaining at the outset that this evaluation *was not* an impact assessment of ADF activities. This was because only 7% of the projects had so far been completed and that PCRs too were available for only 9 of the 50 completed projects. This report *is* therefore rather an assessment of (a) the extent to which ADF strategic objectives, organisation structure, policies, lending instruments and systems are in place to deliver the development effectiveness; (b) the degree to which ADB has successfully implemented the directives and recommendations of ADF VII-IX; (c) whether ADF resources have been used in accordance with the instructions of the Deputies; and (d) it includes recommendations for the future and suggestions for ADF X.

Placing the events in their perspective, he explained that the Bank grew rapidly in the early 1990s but in a sharp reversal faced an unprecedented decline in the mid-1990s. Since then, in the past eight years, as a result of large-scale reforms, largely driven by the donors, the Bank was in a process of a fairly fast recovery. The net concessional transfers from ADF to RMCs were much lower than those from the World Bank. In addition, ADB commands much smaller financial and human resources compared to other MDBs even though it approved a larger number of projects than some of them; it manages its portfolio with a smaller number of staff by operating in a largely centralized manner.

The Bank had undergone deep and broad structural and organizational reforms in 1995 and again in 2002. The 1995 reforms involved substantial downsizing, streamlining, centralising and controlling, especially in the areas of procurement and disbursement. In the 2002 reorganisation, the strategic apex was expanded along with creation of sector departments. Several policies and instruments were created to improve project quality and financial management, strengthen human resources, upgrade telecommunication systems, introduce Results-Based Management and initiate delegation of authority. Substantial efforts were also made to improve partnerships and donor co-ordination. During this period, the Bank had formulated over 40 major policies and guidelines, which are analytically sound, poverty focussed and representative of contemporary thinking. There are however, some major *unfinished businesses*: country focus, decentralisation, gender balance, stronger research capability, and partnerships with other donors in the continent.

During the ADF VII-IX period, in its efforts to translate structures and policies into programmes, the Bank has put in place an extensive range of practices to comply with the demands of Deputies that are in line with best practices. The Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) have become qualitatively better and are the primary strategic planning and policy implementation instruments. However, he noted that the CSPs need strengthening in the area of Economic and Sector Work (ESW), results focus and external review process.

The Bank is moving from project-based to programme-based lending but weak independent ESW and inadequate field presence hampers effectiveness of its interventions. Overall, the set of practices that have emerged during the review period are very much in line with those of comparable institutions and contemporary thinking.

With respect to operational effectiveness he pointed out that much has been done to enhance the operational effectiveness of ADF portfolio. Strenuous efforts have been made to improve quality of operations and evaluation, including the transition from project to country strategy evaluation. The performance of portfolios has been steadily improving and the trend shows that development effectiveness of ADF VII-IX is better. There is, however, need for improving the use of logical framework, ESW, review process, quality of project supervision, and feedback mechanism both for the Bank and the RMCs.

The Bank is now at a defining moment where it has to decide the future course of action and consolidate the gains achieved during the reform/review period. The possible scenarios identified in the report are:

Scenario A: The Bank maintains the status quo by just doing more of what it does now with limited resources, research capabilities and field presence, and getting marginalized in Africa with increased dependency on the World Bank.

Scenario B: The Bank *cuts the coat to fit the cloth* by drastically scaling down its ambitious plans in conformity to the limited resources. This may enable the Bank to become a niche organisation by concentrating on a few areas of comparative advantage but will entail a fundamental shift in its character and increase its dependency on the World Bank.

Scenario C: The Bank moves towards becoming the premier institution for development in Africa through substantial enhancement in financial support to the Bank and Fund and strongly addressing the areas of weakness and *unfinished business*.

He explained that the evaluation concludes that Scenario C is the most desirable for the Bank, being in conformity with its vision to become the premier development finance institution in Africa. At this juncture, it is very much achievable if greater resources are made available to the Bank to enable it to focus on effectively addressing the *unfinished businesses* identified in the report. The evaluation team accordingly recommends a major increase in the resources to be made available to the Bank through ADF X.

4. MAJOR ISSUES DISCUSSED IN THE WORKSHOP

Wide-ranging daylong discussions were held on the analysis, conclusions and recommendations of the IDS report on evaluation of ADF VII-IX portfolio of the Bank. The following were identified as major issues:

1. Future identity of Bank: Choice of Scenarios;
2. Comparative Advantage of the Bank;
3. Greater Participation of RMCs in ADF Negotiations;
4. Likely Impact of New Incumbency Next Year at Presidency;
5. Capacity Building in RMCs;
6. RMC Representation in the Bank; and
7. Other Issues.

There was detailed discussion on these issues and a summary of the same is noted below.

4.1 Future Identity of Bank: Choice of Scenarios

As discussed above, the ADF VII-IX Evaluation has identified three possible future scenarios for the Bank. The Chairman took forward the discussion by briefly presenting his views about the three scenarios presented in the light of the experiences of other MDBs. It was his view that as the Bank cannot abandon its role in poverty reduction in Africa, it really has no choice indeed but to adopt and accept the Scenario C. The Bank has to have its own identity and capability to provide leadership role in Africa by becoming a centre of excellence that could discover and invent Africa-specific solutions. Along the path of Scenario C, the issues in *unfinished business* have to be addressed and resolved. Scenario C is absolutely vital and inescapable if the Bank has to facilitate the process of sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction, social development and good governance in Africa.

During discussions most of the participants supported the Scenario C. They were of the view that there can be no alternative to an institution that can understand and empathise with the needs and aspirations of the people of the continent in an African context; the Bank alone is in a position to play this role and be the premier development finance institution of Africa. Any diminished role for it would not only be inconsistent with but also injurious to the interests of the developing countries of Africa. A few participants were also of the view that while Scenario C has to be the ultimate aim and objective, in view of the current limitations of the Bank and its human resources, initially and for the present, it may be more realistic to adopt Scenario B. None of the participants considered Scenario A as a realistic option.

Participants pointed out that the current growth rate of GDP in most countries in Africa is in the region of 3%. In order to eradicate the scourge of poverty and attain the MDGs, it is essential that a minimum rate of growth of 6-8% per annum be achieved and sustained. This cannot be accomplished unless enhanced ADF resources as visualised in Scenario C are committed. For ADB to sustain the reform process and to achieve the required higher levels of excellence and performance, it must have larger resources. Further it was noted that only a stronger Bank with robust research, analytical and prescriptive capabilities would be able to provide the financial and development support to its RMCs and be able to innovate Africa specific solutions. As a more efficient premier development financial institution of the continent, the Bank will also be enabled to mobilise additional resources for its RMCs, for example from the private sector. The participants strongly felt that Scenario C is inevitable and must be adopted with concomitant commitment of larger ADF resources.

4.2 Comparative Advantage of the Bank

There was detailed discussion on the issue of comparative advantage of the Bank highlighting the considerable divergence of views on what it means or implies, both at the conceptual as well as operational levels. While analysing some of the areas perceived as comparative advantages for the Bank, the following viewpoints were expressed by the participants:

- The areas/sectors that give *better returns to investment*, such as exploitation of mineral resources, food production and marketing, and secondary education;
- The areas/sectors where the Bank has a *competitive* advantage, or it is better equipped than others to handle i.e., the sections of its portfolio where its performance is better;
- The *critical sectors or the need based high priority sectors* such as agriculture, food security, major dams and infrastructure that could stimulate growth and reduce poverty levels in the RMCs, and
- The *critical areas* in which other donors are not investing or have withdrawn from lending, such as major infrastructure projects, that would enhance the productive capacity of the country.

Some participants pointed out that the African character of the Bank – its exclusive focus on Africa, majority African shareholding and majority African staff – was its biggest comparative advantage in that it has the unique position to understand Africa-specific problems and evolve, discover and invent Africa-specific solutions better than other donors.

There was an evident lack of clarity or consensus on what exactly were the areas in which the Bank could claim to have comparative or competitive advantage. There was therefore recognition by the participants that there was a need for reflection and study to determine the areas of comparative advantages of the Bank. This needs to be done in the context of a proper assessment of the institutional capacity of the Bank vis-à-vis its Vision statement, country specific priorities or needs, and an assessment of funding priorities of other donors. Some participants pointed out that the matter had been examined in some earlier studies and it may be useful to review those studies before launching or during a fresh major study. After discussion, it was the general view that a fresh delineation of current comparative advantages of the Bank needed a careful review to enhance development effectiveness of the Bank and for it to chart out its future action plan.

4.3 Greater Participation of RMCs in ADF X Negotiations

Many participants pointed out that even though the ADF funding exercise directly impacts the RMCs and particularly the poorer ones, their representatives do not have any substantial role in the ADF replenishment negotiations. Their participation is hardly sought for. As a result, their views and concerns do not get reflected in the final outcome. The Director OPEV clarified that for ADF X the Deputies, in a departure from the past practice, have allowed observer level participation of RMCs in the ADF X replenishment process. It may not be possible for all countries to get the opportunity to individually participate but representatives nominated by each of the regions will be allowed to participate as observers.

4.4 Likely Impact of New Incumbency Next year at the Presidency of the Bank

The Bank has actively progressed on the path of structural and operational reforms during the ADF VII-IX period and for it to strengthen its status as the premier development finance institution in Africa, the reform process will have to be aggressively pursued and taken forward. The participants felt that in the context of taking the reforms process forward and effectively tackling the large volume of unfinished business, strong, effective and efficient leadership will be absolutely critical.

Some participants expressed the view that the selection process should be less politically driven. On the other hand, some others felt that the workshop was hardly the appropriate forum to discuss the criteria and process of selection and in any case the subject was not a part of the agenda. The IDS Consultants explained that even though leadership issue was an extremely important component in the determination of the Bank's future role, they had not discussed the issue in the report as it was beyond the TOR of their evaluation. They however agreed that the issue did merit reflection at some appropriate forum to make the selection process less politically driven.

4.5 Capacity Building in RMCs

Many participants explicitly acknowledged the role of the RMCs in achieving less than expected impacts for development financing done by the Bank. The general tendency is to take a limited view of the causative factors for programme failures and pass the blame on to the Bank and its *modus operandi*. But that is not always true. The participants recognised that RMCs also have their shortcomings and are as much responsible for the less than optimum results in implementation and

impact.

The RMCs often lack capacity to efficiently and effectively design and implement projects and programmes. There are also problems of financial management at the RMC level. The countries are not able to prepare timely audit and accounts statements and submit to the Bank. In many cases this is due to the lack of adequate capacity. Some participants noted that the capacity building components of ADB projects are not strong enough and as a consequence the project implementation in many a case is severely affected.

4.6 RMC Representation in the Bank

Many participants expressed their concern that representation of many regions and RMCs at managerial and staff positions in the Bank was inadequate. Some countries are over-represented while many others are under-represented. It was the general consensus that a balanced representation among the Bank staff will enable the Bank to better address the specific problems of individual RMCs. A suggestion that for the less developed countries to have a better representation, a dilution of minimum qualification standards be considered was not supported by the participants in general. It was the general consensus that the Bank should not dilute the standards of quality and qualification of staff but should take effective steps to quickly remove the imbalance in the representation of the regions and RMCs. This aspect should also receive due emphasis during the current process of filling the existing vacancies in the Bank

Mr. Giorgis informed the participants that while the Bank is committed to maintaining its standards of qualifications and quality of staff, it also appreciates the need to have balanced representation in its staff from different regions and countries. Efforts are continuously being made to correct the historical regional and country imbalances among Bank staff. To this end, the Bank strives to give preference to candidates from underrepresented regions/countries in the event of having equally qualified candidates from different countries.

4.7 Other Issues

A number of issues other than the major issues noted above to make the development interventions more effective were also raised by the participants during the workshop. These are noted below:

(a) Need for Greater Flow of Financial Resources

In order to achieve substantial reduction in poverty and attain the MDGs it is essential to have greater net financial flows into the RMCs. The participants expressed the hope that in the ADF X the RMCs would get larger financial resources. Better resource allocation is also essential for better preparation and implementation of PRSPs that form the cornerstone of poverty reduction efforts of the Bank.

Even while higher resource allocation is essential, the need for a better focus in the projects that the Bank supports cannot be overlooked. In many countries, a large number of projects in different areas/sectors are taken up and the available resources are thinly spread whereby the overall impact in any single area/sector is insubstantial. This can be avoided by having a better focus in the selection of portfolios.

Sustainability of debt is also deteriorating in many countries. During ADF X the Bank must focus more on helping the countries to design sustainable strategies to achieve MDGs.

(b) Strengthening of the Bank

Capacity to undertake independent ESW: The Bank should build its own capacity for ESW and build such capacities at the RMC level as well. This independent ESW will enable the Bank to have particular focus on Africa.

R & D Capacity of the Bank: For the Bank to excel as a knowledge Bank, it is essential to promote research and development, sharply directly towards Africa and its unique situations, issues and solutions. It may not be a good idea to always follow the World Bank. The ADB must have its own standards, which are responsive to the African context. This will also help the Bank to meaningfully develop and assert its 'African character,' which is presently lacking.

Staff Vacancies in the Bank: The Bank has a large number of vacancies, which limits its capacity to function effectively in execution of its policies and implementation of programmes / projects. The participants were of the view that Africa has no shortage of brainpower and efforts should be made to speed up the process of recruitment.

(c) Bank Supervision and Monitoring

Quality of Bank's Engagement with RMCs: The participants referred to the lack of a country focus in the Bank and the non-availability of a single point contact for the RMCs. The RMCs face difficulties in eliciting timely response of the Bank, particularly in implementation and procurement issues. There are inordinate delays in communication on the part of the Bank.

Feedback on PCRs: The RMC participants also pointed out their inability to get timely feedback on the PCRs submitted by them. In order to strengthen the lesson learning process, PCRs need to be taken more seriously both by the Bank as well as RMCs.

Delay in Disbursements: The participants pointed out the delays in disbursement of funds by the Bank, which often becomes a setback to implementation.

Bank Engagement with Field staff: The participants also pointed to the poor quality at entry of some projects. They attributed it to the Bank's lack of adequate engagement with field staff at the time of project identification, design and appraisal. The consultation is often limited to only a few officials in the finance ministry.

Greater Field Presence and Delegation of Powers: The participants pointed out the inadequate delegation of powers to Task Managers and the need for greater field presence of the Bank through empowered Country Offices. They also advocated greater delegation of authority to the Country Offices so that they do not act as mere post offices. The World Bank and other regional MDBs have extensive network of field offices and are able to provide timely support and advice in aid co-ordination, closer monitoring and capacity building of the RMCs. It is essential for the Bank to also have more country offices, which would facilitate better interaction with the Bank.

Continuity in Position of Task Managers: Implementation of projects often gets affected due to frequent transfers of the Task Managers. It leads to inconsistencies in implementation. Many a time, even for the same Guideline, the interpretation of different Task Managers is different. The Bank should therefore avoid frequent changes in Task Managers.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Monitoring and evaluation by the Bank has to be strengthened, both in quality and content. Optimally spaced field supervision missions from the Bank with relevant skills mix can be of immense assistance to the executing agency/borrower staff in effectively handling the problems encountered during project implementation and facilitating timely learning and course correction.

(d) Aid Co-ordination and Partnership

Aid co-ordination is very essential. Examples were given where the Bank has not responded in time due to which the co-financing projects have suffered or the Bank was kept out of the programme funding. Aid co-ordination would help build synergy between operations of various donors in the country. Bank has to devise ways of better co-ordination with other donors.

Some countries have started the process of involving civil society, private sector and development partners in the areas of identifying the country requirements, priority areas, resource allocation, expenditure reviews and even monitoring and evaluation, as best practices. A Joint Assistance Strategy for all donor agencies would lead to a co-ordinated effort in these crosscutting initiatives that are new for the RMCs.

5. BANK'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO THE EVALUATION

Mr. Giorgis, Director, OPEV, informed the participants that the feedback from this Workshop and the various points made by the participants would be reported to the management of the ADB. He added that the Bank attaches great importance to this evaluation and even though final decision on the conclusions and recommendations of the IDS report would be taken by the boards and Deputies after this process, the Bank has already initiated a number of steps to address some of the issues included in the 'unfinished business' identified in the report.

Mr. Giorgis added that the 'unfinished business' which includes issues of (a) inadequate economic and sector work; (b) field presence; (c) staff size and skill mix; (d) improvement in internal processes; (e) lack of country focus; (f) inadequate research and knowledge generation capabilities and (g) decentralization have all been recognized as legitimate concerns which should be tackled incrementally. Management has prepared an action plan to address all these issues.

Mr. Giorgis then apprised the participants of some of the steps already initiated. He also provided information on some of the points raised by the participants.

5.1 Country Focus

The lack of role clarity between the Country Department and Sector Departments in the Bank has inevitably led to lack of co-ordination and non-availability of a point person for RMCs. The Bank has recognised the need for clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the Sector and Country Departments so that RMCs can have a single point (country department) contact and steps have already been initiated to achieve this.

5.2 Quality at Entry

A weak review process at project design and appraisal has led to deterioration of Quality at Entry of Bank portfolio. In order to address this problem, the Bank has accepted, in principle, the concept of Peer Review. The idea of forming Thematic Groups from which Peer Reviewers can be selected and extension of Peer Review at other stages of the project cycle is under consideration.

5.3 Delegation of Authority

Already powers have been delegated to the Task Managers. As has been noted in the IDS report, the problem is not entirely of lack of delegation of authority but also of a reluctance or hesitation

on the part of Task Managers to use the powers delegated to them. The Bank is planning a series of workshops to sensitise the Task Managers about their roles and responsibilities and the powers available to them. This, it is hoped, will encourage ask Managers to take decisions and speed up the decision making process.

5.4 Decentralisation and Field Presence

Recognising the need for its effective field presence, the Bank has decided to establish 25 new field offices. Keeping in view the resource availability, it is planned to establish 5-8 country offices per year. The location will be dependent on the volume of business that should be substantial enough to justify the functioning of a full-fledged Country Office. A greater availability of resources from ADF X could help accelerate the opening of new Country Offices.

5.5 Staff Vacancies

Recruitment of staff to fill the existing vacancies has been recognised by the Bank as a priority area. Decision has already been taken to recruit more staff and it is hoped that by the end of 2004 the Bank will be able to recruit about 100 new staff.

5.6 Weak Research and ESW Capability

Research and ESW have been identified as the weak links in the Bank's capabilities. In the next budget, a greater allocation and an increased emphasis to develop ESW and research capability is planned.

5.7 Instruments

In order to have greater development impact of its assistance, the Bank has decided to move more and more from Investment Lending to Programme Lending. Strengthening of Bank's ESW capability will help in this process of shift to programme lending.

5.8 Criteria for ADF Allocation between RMCs

Two issues have been raised by the participants with regard to the ADF allocation to the RMCs. These are: (a) the size of the allocation is too small; and (b) allocation based on past performance is disadvantageous to the smaller or post-conflict countries, who are constrained by their existing capacity limitation; it does not allow such countries any opportunity to improve their capacity and perform better. Mr. Giorgis clarified that the overall size of ADF replenishment determines the size of allocations to RMCs. Increase in allocations will be feasible if the ADF X replenishment is higher than the past replenishments. As far as the allocation criteria are concerned, performance based allocation is widely practiced by the donors and is generally accepted by the RMCs. It is based on the principle that countries with right policies should be rewarded. The Bank is however, examining the development of a special policy for allocations and support for the post-conflict countries to help in their reconstruction and revival efforts.

5.9 Aid Co-ordination and Harmonisation between Donors

The Bank has recognised this as a major issue. It is hoped that the establishment of additional country offices would facilitate better co-ordination between donors and help in removing areas of disharmony.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Participants appreciated the Bank's effort to address the issues of unfinished business elaborated to in the evaluation report, towards leading the Bank to become the premier development finance institution in Africa. Even though several participants dwelt on the shortcomings in Bank's operations and how it affects efficiency and effectiveness of the development initiatives that the Bank supports they were unanimous in their appreciation for the Bank's achievements and the contribution it has made to the development process in the RMCs especially in sectors such as Infrastructure, which have substantially increased accessibility of the people to the social and economic infrastructure and paved the way for economic growth. The Bank now is at a defining moment wherein it has complied with all the expectations of ADF VII-IX and needs a larger resource flow which will enable it to become a stronger Bank financially as well as intellectually. It will then be able to address, *inter alia*, the need for larger net flow of resources to the RMCs and operate efficiently with greater country focus and attention to the comparative advantages.

Annex

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